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SUBJECT: SALOMAO OUTLINES AMBITIOUS SADC SUMMIT AGENDA

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Scott Hamilton, Reason 1.4 (b)

¶1. (C) Summary: SADC Executive Secretary Tomaz Salomao told the Gaborone diplomatic corps on August 25 that the upcoming September 7-8 summit hopes to tackle a host of political and economic issues. Particular priorities will be reviewing progress made in resolving political impasses in eastern Congo, Zimbabwe, and Madagascar; seeking remedies to ameliorate the impact of the global financial crisis on the region; and discussing trade arrangements both within SADC and with other regional organizations. Salomao's laundry list revealed few surprises, although it appears unlikely SADC heads of state will have enough time to properly address all of the issues he raised. End summary.

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SUMMIT LOGISTICS  
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¶2. (SBU) Salomao started by noting that despite concerns about Congo's capacity to host the Summit of Heads of State and Government at Kinshasa's African Union City, he does not anticipate any logistical problems. The Summit, as is custom, will be preceded by three meetings, which will be held at Kinshasa's Grand Hotel -- the Standing Committee of Senior Officials on September 2-3, the Finance Committee on the 4th, and the Council of Ministers on the 5th and 6th. Rwanda and the Republic of Congo are likely to be invited -- the former as an explicit signal of improved bilateral relations, and the latter as a neighborly gesture.

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POLITICAL AND SECURITY ISSUES PRIORITIZED  
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¶3. (C) Salomao emphasized that SADC heads of state were going to place a particular emphasis on discussing and reviewing progress being made in resolving the region's lingering political crises. The following issues will be prioritized:

--Madagascar. Former Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano will brief the heads of state on progress he has made in bringing the four relevant parties together to solve the ongoing political crisis in Madagascar. Salomao said he just came from Maputo, where the parties have signed six agreements designed to resolve the political impasse, and he is optimistic that new elections can be held by October 2010.

--Zimbabwe. Salomao said regional leaders will review progress being made on implementation of the Global Political Agreement and discuss outstanding issues, like the allocation of ministerial portfolios between ZANU-PF and the MDC. He said the relationship between Zimbabwe and Botswana also will be discussed.

--Congo. While the political and security situations in eastern Congo are improved, Salomao said the region remains an area of concern for SADC.

--Lesotho. Salomao also cited the simmering political tensions in Lesotho as a cause for concern and said former Botswanan President Ketumile Masire will brief heads of state on the current situation and the way forward.

14. (C) SADC leaders also intend to discuss African Union proposals for a more unified continental government. Salomao said SADC leaders are generally agreed that such a move needs to be implemented slowly and progressively, with buy-in from all stakeholders. Salomao noted that "it's not Addis Ababa or Sirte who are to decide on continental government." Rather, individual states and regional organizations must make such a determination.

15. (SBU) As for security issues, the heads of state intend to talk about combatting piracy in the region. While the popular view is that piracy is an issue confined to Somalia, Salomao said there are growing concerns that Tanzania, Mozambique, Madagascar, and Mauritius could suffer from piracy to the same extent as the Seychelles, the most affected SADC state thus far.

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ECONOMIC CONCERNS, TRADE ALSO ON AGENDA  
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16. (SBU) On the economic front, Salomao said SADC leaders intend to discuss the effects of the global economic crisis on the region and what steps can be taken to ameliorate them. Of particular concern is how states heavily dependent on tourism -- as are many within SADC -- can weather the crisis in the medium term without suffering extensive job losses. Salomao noted that the Summit will consider making the economic crisis the topic of the 2010 SADC Consultative Conference with donors.

17. (C) Regarding trade, Salomao said two key issues will be addressed. One is the likelihood of a Southern African Customs Union being implemented by 2010, as currently planned, which will be discussed both by heads of state and by the Finance Committee. In a candid moment, Salomao admitted that working groups agree that 2010 probably is not a workable date, as South Africa in particular would like more time to let the Free Trade Area -- implemented just last year -- establish itself. Finance ministers plan to meet in November to discuss the issue further, and SADC may yet hold an Extraordinary Summit on the issue. (See septel on issues facing greater trade integration within SADC)

18. (C) In addition, SADC leaders plan to examine the proposed memorandum of understanding between SADC, the East African Community (EAC), and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), determining in particular whether such an agreement opens the door for a broader customs union. Salomao noted that SADC Finance ministers in particular need to discuss how COMESA's creation of a customs union earlier this year affects SADC's own plans, given that six SADC states have membership in both organizations.

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OTHER ISSUES OF NOTE  
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19. (C) Salomao also noted the following issues:

--Preparations for the upcoming African Cup of Nations soccer tournament, to be held in Angola next January, as well as the World Cup in South Africa next June will be discussed. SADC leaders want to discuss in particular the possibility of a SADC "univisa" during the tournament for simplified travel in Southern Africa.

--Namibia has been named as incoming SADC chair for 2010. Salomao said that while this would normally mean next year's

summit will be held in Windhoek, the fact that this will be SADC's 30th anniversary means it might be moved to a location that could accommodate larger crowds.

--SADC heads of state will discuss at the Summit who will take over from Mozambique as next year's chair of the Organ on Peace and Security. Salomao gave no insights as to whom would be selected, simply noting that its rotational nature meant it would not be a state who has held the position in recent years.

--A SADC state is due to inherit the African Union chairmanship in January 2010, and Malawi and Lesotho are seeking it. This issue also will be discussed at the Summit.

--SADC justice ministers will submit to the Summit a report on the SADC tribunal ruling last year in favor of a Zimbabwean commercial farmer who alleged his land was taken from him illegally by the Government of Zimbabwe. The ruling has been ignored by the GoZ, posing a major obstacle to the nascent SADC Tribunal's credibility.

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COMMENT  
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10. (C) Salomao's laundry list of issues is a daunting one for a two-day summit, and it strikes us as unlikely that significant progress will be made on many of them. The issues related to trade, both within the region and with other regional entities, are likely to prove particularly vexing and probably will be punted to a later date. Worth watching will be attitudes of new regional leaders Jacob Zuma and Ian Khama toward the proceedings. Khama in particular has thus far shown himself to be outspoken and opposed to papering over disputes in the name of regional consensus. End comment.

HAMILTON